

PSALMS: DIARIES OF GODLY OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS
Psalm Seventy-Nine - Handling Complete, Tragic Spiritual Failure
(Psalm 79:1-13)

I. Introduction

- A. While Nadine and I recently shopped in a local grocery, we saw two people at different spots who **used** to be at Nepaug Church, but who are now living shipwrecked or carnal lives! It was such a troubling event!
- B. But, what if *we ourselves* were to fall into complete, tragic spiritual failure like these dear people! What if it was **US** who were looked upon with dismay by others -- what could *we* do about it?!
- C. Psalm 79:1-13, a teaching psalm (*mizmor*) presents the people of Jerusalem after the complete collapse of the city to Nebuchadnezzar, and this powerful, sad psalm offers a way **out** and back to spiritual victory.

II. Handling Complete, Tragic Spiritual Failure, Psalm 79:1-13.

- A. The Psalmist poured out his anguish of soul at the tragic destruction of his people in Jerusalem, Ps. 79:1-4:
 - 1. The Gentiles had invaded the holy temple complex, defiling it, and reducing the city to rubble, 79:1.
 - 2. The fallen bodies of God's servants, Israel lay fallen in the streets as food for the birds and meat for the wild animals, Ps. 79:2. This treatment of bodies was very painful in the Ancient Near Eastern culture.
 - 3. On top of it, there was no one left to bury the dead, to change the sad lot of the fallen, Ps. 79:3.
 - 4. As a result, the neighboring nations looked with scorn on the people of Israel, Ps. 79:4.
- B. Having itemized the tragic lot of the city, the psalmist then petitioned God for vengeance, Ps. 79:5-7: He petitioned that God would cease being angry at Israel, which anger was seen as leading to this state of affairs, and in turn judge the nations that had devastated the city as these did not believe in Him.
- C. Realizing that this terrible current state of affairs was due to Israel's **inexcusable SIN**, the Psalmist begged God's commitment to **His OWN** covenant **promises** regarding Israel's survival, and the **glorious reputation of God** connected to those promises as his **SOLE BASIS** of asking for restoration, 79:8-10:
 - 1. The Psalmist petitioned God to help Israel in its desperate plight and no longer to hold its sins against it, the apparent cause for this state of affairs, Ps. 79:8 in view of Deut. 28:15, 49-68.
 - 2. The sole **BASIS** for this request was God's **reputation** implied in His unconditional Abrahamic Covenant, Ps. 79:9 with Gen. 12:1-3 and Ex. 32:9-10, 11-14.
 - a. The Psalmist expressed his plea that God protect His reputation and glory by helping Israel, 79:9.
 - b. This same plea was made by Moses earlier who had pleaded with God not to destroy errant Israel out of protection of His reputation and unconditional promises to the fathers, Ex. 32:9-10, 11-14.
 - c. Since God decided against His original plan to destroy that generation based on Moses' plea (Ex. 32:14), the Psalmist in Psalm 79:9 was hoping in that precedent in making his current appeal!
- D. Based upon this appeal, the Psalmist expressed real **hope** for renewal, Ps. 79:11-13:
 - 1. He pleaded that the groans of those taken captive would come before God as the groans of a former generation in Egyptian captivity in Moses' era had come, leading to deliverance based upon God's unconditional Abrahamic Covenant, 79:11a ; Ex. 2:24-25.
 - 2. He pleaded that God would release those prisoners condemned to die, Ps. 79:11b.
 - 3. He pleaded that God would repay Israel's enemies with the reproaches they had inadvertently hurled at God by hurling them at God's treasured people, the people of the Abrahamic Covenant, Ps. 79:12.
 - 4. Based upon this pleading, the Psalmist expected to praise God forever, along with generations of the people of Israel yet to be born, Ps. 79:13!

Lesson: Since Psalm 79 is a teaching psalm, or a *mizmor* (v. 1a), its author sought to get the grieving survivors of Jerusalem back to the Lord's unconditional promises concerning their welfare as the **SOLE** basis of hoping for a renewal. Thus, there is always hope for renewal following a spiritually devastating failure if we understand and utilize the **GRACE** of God in our behalf!

Application: All believers **SIN** -- 1 John 1:8-10 makes that fact abundantly **CLEAR!** However, not all believers **REBOUND** out of sinful failure because they do not take advantage of the Lord's unconditional promises concerning them that have **n** thing to do with man's ability or lack of ability to be pleasing to **GOD!** We must understand and use the **GRACE** of God if we would remain resiliently optimistic even in the midst of great personal spiritual failure.